

Asian Natural Disasters — Harbinger Of Events To Come

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In a span of five weeks, repeated typhoons, tsunamis, floods, mudslides and earthquakes swept through ten nations leaving thousands of people dead and rendering millions more homeless. The first of the natural disasters, tropical storm Ketsana, struck Manila and the surrounding area on September 26th during which time it caused massive floods and mudslides in addition to forcing thousands to flee their wrecked homes.

Then on October 3, this type of devastation visited again with Tsunami Parma. Altogether, the total impact of Ketsana and Parma left 929 people dead in the Philippines and hundreds of thousands homeless.

At the same time, many victims were forced to live in flooded areas with contaminated water that would, subsequently, cause widespread illness. Further, tropical storm Mirinae, last week, increased the number dead by twenty-seven in the Philippines while 87,000 were already living in temporary, often flimsy shelters due to the earlier storms when Mirinae struck.

Shortly thereafter, Mirinae hit Vietnam causing ninety-one deaths with an additional thirteen people missing after Ketsana had already killed 163 people in that nation. At the same time, many people required evacuation in Vietnam while forced to abandon thousands of greatly damaged homes and approximately 12,400 acres (5,000 hectares) of crops ruined from the Mirinae strike.

Ketsana and Parma had, likewise, brought the total dead to sixteen in Laos and eleven in Cambodia. Moreover, torrential rains killed 247 in South India in the same time period and left two million homeless there.

Similarly, floods and mudslides took the lives of 143 in Nepal. (The Nepal circumstances, while occurring in tandem with the other disasters, is more directly related to the glacial melting in the Himalayas). In addition, the Tsunami that struck the South Pacific, after the 8.3 earthquake of September 29, left 183 people dead in Samoa, thirty-four in American Samoa and nine dead in Tonga.

One day later, on September 30, a 7.6 earthquake hit West Sumatra Indonesia killing 1,117 and leaving two million homeless. Some of the more remote areas have yet to be reached by aid workers.

Aside from the personal tragedies of the hundreds of thousands who have lost loved ones, homes and their livelihoods — millions throughout the region who live or lived in low lying

areas have been and will increasingly be at the mercy of rising sea levels in times to come. The low lying coastal regions of South India, Bangladesh, Burma, Cambodia and Vietnam, as well as the numerous Islands throughout the Pacific, Indian Ocean, Arabian Sea and parts of the African coast already have perennial flooding and, with a rising sea level and greater frequency and intensity of typhoons and tsunamis, more international preparation, assistance and cooperation are needed than have been rendered to date.

The more and better prepared people are for these recurring weather patterns and earthquake events — the greater there is a possibility that many lives, that would otherwise be lost, can be saved. Especially this is the case due to the inevitability of these catastrophic adversities repeating again and again with ever more ferocity as climate change factors set increasingly in place. With the readily evident rise in sea level, melting on the north and south poles and melting seen in the Himalayas, Andes and Mount Kilimanjaro — the evidence is irrefutable that further devastation related to global warming will be an ongoing theme.

All considered, I encourage people to help the many people deeply harmed by these recent Asian natural calamities. When doing so, please specify your desired country and cause. (All mentioned above are in great need). Meanwhile, here is a list of organizations specifically providing disaster aid: redcross.org, care.org, unicef.org, oxfam.org and crs.org (Catholic Relief Services).

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